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SUMMARY OF LEADERSHIP MEETING AUGUST 4, 1964

The meeting opened with the President complaining about reports on the tickers about the meeting being held and stating that "the facts we would like to present to you are to be held in the closest confidence and are to be kept in this room until announced." Halleck said: "I did not tell a damn person." The President said: "I know no one did, but it is on both tickers anyway. We have to be very careful. Please don't discuss what goes on in this room."

Then at the President's request, Secretary McNamara gave a briefing on what was planned. The President then asked Secretary Rusk to give a report on the political situation. The President then asked Mr. McCone to give his estimate of any enemy action that might be expected--what response there might be.

On being questioned by Senator Russell, General Wheeler discussed the type of anti-aircraft installations that were in the area. After some discussion with Fulbright, Aiken, and Hickenlooper Mansfield read a paper expressing general opposition. Then Hickenlooper and Rusk had a discussion comparing this situation with the Cuban situation. Following some conversation with Secretary Rusk by Mrs. Bolton and Senator Saltonstall, Senator Aiken asked for Mr. McCone to give information on the provocation, if any. McCone explained the activity in the area prior to the attack. The President then asked General Wheeler to report on the recommendations of General Taylor in Viet Nam. Senator Russell then asked if we were sure "that we had enough stuff to do this job" and commented he did not want to do it half way. McNamara reiterated the extent of the equipment in the area.

Senator Russell then asked how many sorties were planned and Secretary McNamara then said: "We have issued orders for only a single night's action. These orders are already in being. Russell asked if the attack would be in daylight over there and McNamara replied: "our attacks will be in daylight hours."

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Senator Russell expressed the hope that they would keep going until they get the last one of the bases. Saltonstall expressed agreement that we had no choice after we had been attacked twice. The President then said as follows:

"We thought there were two decisions to take. After we were attacked yesterday and today and nine torpedoes were shot at our destroyers forty miles on the high seas we had to answer that attack. There are four bases where they use these boats. There is a relatively small civilian population around them. We can tuck our tails and run, but if we do these countries will feel all they have to do to scare us is to shoot the American flag. The question is how do we retaliate. We have worked out this plan on these four bases. There have been many discussions and recommendations by people in the country that we go into this the northern area and not allow them to murder us from bases of safety. These boats came from these bases and have been shooting the American ships.

"I think I know what the reaction would be if we tucked our tails. I thought I should get the Security Council and get the leadership and after the orders are executed I would plan to make a statement something like this." The President then read the proposed statement. Senator Saltonstall pointed out that the word "limited" was used three times in the statement and suggested that the word "determined" be substituted for it and let the limitations speak for themselves. The President said: "We want them to know we are not going to take it lying down but we are not going to destroy their cities and we hope we can prepare them for the course we want follow." "WILL

Saltonstall said: "I agree with what you are doing." Mrs. Bolton said: "I would do it. Keep them a little bit in the dark on what we will do." Secretary Rusk said: "I think there is some advantage in not leaving in doubt that we are not doing this as a pretext for a larger war. I think the time factors involved are important. We have not had a chance to discuss this with all the Governments that will have to be consulted."

Senator Hickenlooper said: "I agree that the word 'limited' should not be used three times." The President then suggested a change in the word saying "our responses for the moment will be limited." Senator Dirksen said: "If I had it to do I would put our references to the word 'limited' in deep freeze. It connotes we would be like sitting ducks. We should make it clear we would meet every enemy threat."

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Senator Dirksen then pointed out that the newspaper people knew about the meeting just as soon or before he did. Secretary McNamara pointed out the importance of keeping security because the northern Viet Nameese could use the boats and their 'defenses' could be alerted."

Congressman Halleck then said: "If we are going to have it, it has to be overwhelming." He indicated a desire to hear from the Speaker and the Majority Leader. There was then a discussion of Korea where there was no resolution and Formosa and the Middle East where there were resolutions. Senator Hicken looper said "It seems to me there should be no doubt as to whether the President should have the right to order the armed forces into action. It is my own personal feeling that it is up to the President to prepare the kind and type of resolution he believes would be proper. It is up to Congress to see whether they will pass it or not. I have no doubt in my mind that concrete action would be taken."

The President said: "I had that feeling but felt I wanted the advice of each of you and wanted to consult with you. We felt we should move with the action recommended by the Joint Chiefs, but I wanted to get the Congressional concurrence. I think it would be very damaging to ask for it and not get it."

The President then said: "We will probably make some changes in it. I don't ask you to draft the message. We have taken the resolutions you have had in the past. I don't think any resolution is necessary, but I think it is a lot better to have it in the light of what we did in Korea."

The Speaker said: "I think Congress has a responsibility and should show a united front to the world." Halleck said: "The President knows there is no partisanship among us. Are we getting fouled up here on something we could put off? There was never any hesitation when we had the deal about Cuba. I was the first to speak up and say Mr. President count me in."

The President said: "We can pretty well work out a good resolution with a minimum of doctrine. ^{outlines} I wanted to see if you felt it was ^{the} wise thing to do."

Hickenlooper said: "I think the resolution is appropriate and proper, but I doubt you should mention the resolution in your remarks this evening."

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The President said: "I did not plan to mention it." The President then said "I have told you what I want from you." He then went around the table to each person and made an expression of support one way or another.

Saltonstall and Russell expressed he hope that the President could make the United Nations more effective in fields like this. Halleck said: "I think it will be passed overwhelmingly. As far as I am concerned I have made my position clear here and in all other cases. Aiken said: "By the time you send it up there won't be anything for us to do but support you."

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